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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 299th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 27 February 2007, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Ban ..... (Secretary-General of the United Nations)
Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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07-25071 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chairman** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. **Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the situation on the ground in the Palestinian territories remained difficult and the sufferings of the Palestinian people continued. The international community should therefore redouble its efforts to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy the full exercise of their right to self-determination.

4. He nominated Mr. Badji (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chairman, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) for election and Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) for re-election to the two offices of Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

5. **Mr. Mavroyiannis** (Cyprus) seconded the nominations.

6. *Mr. Badji (Senegal), Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

7. *Mr. Badji (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Secretary-General

8. **The Secretary-General** said that the path to a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict had been filled with obstacles, frustration and tragedy. Over the years, many thousands of innocent lives had been lost or shattered, and despair more than hope had been the norm. The Palestinian people still yearned for the freedom and dignity denied them for decades, while the Israeli people yearned for long-term security. Neither could achieve their legitimate demands without a settlement of the conflict. A critical juncture had been reached in efforts to move beyond crisis management towards genuine resolution.

9. The challenges to progress were enormous. Israeli military operations, severe movement restrictions, withholding of Palestinian revenues and socio-economic decline had precipitated a humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Continued settlement activity and construction of the Israeli barrier further eroded the quality of life and undermined efforts to achieve a viable Palestinian State. At the same time, continued rocket attacks and another suicide attack targeting Israeli civilians had prolonged their feeling of insecurity, which had resulted, in turn, in tighter restrictions on Palestinians. Moreover, the withdrawal of much direct donor support from the Palestinian Authority Government in the light of its lack of clear commitment to basic principles of the peace process had been debilitating to Palestinian institutions.

10. Indeed, nearly all the developments of 2006 had led away from the goal shared by a majority of Israelis and Palestinians: two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The aim for 2007 must be to reverse that trend.

11. He had been encouraged by the recent agreement on a Palestinian national unity Government reached in Mecca, which had helped to calm the internal situation in the Palestinian territories and had marked an intensification of Arab efforts to promote calm and moderation in the region. He thanked the leaders involved, in particular King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, for the energy exerted to achieve that step. He had also been encouraged by the renewal of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue through meetings between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert to discuss practical steps to ease tensions and their recent talks hosted by the United States Secretary of State. Those steps had been buttressed by the renewed engagement of the Quartet, which had met twice in the past month. He was seeking to join its efforts to clarify the political horizon and to ensure the development of a dialogue that would lead to negotiations on a comprehensive settlement. Those efforts should be supported by strong international assistance to strengthen and preserve the Palestinian institutions that must form the basis of a Palestinian State.

12. He expressed gratitude to donor countries that had increased aid for the economic, social and humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people and to the United Nations entities, as well as their partners in Government and civil society, who performed their mission on the ground under difficult and at times dangerous conditions, particularly in Gaza. He urged the international community to take advantage of available political opportunities with creativity and

persistence and the right mix of firmness and flexibility, to find the path towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on an end to the 1967 occupation and the creation of an independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace with Israel.

Statement by the Chairman

13. **The Chairman**, speaking as the representative of Senegal, expressed his gratitude for the confidence the Committee had shown in his delegation and in him personally. He also welcomed the presence of the Secretary-General, who was demonstrating his commitment to the work of the Committee and to the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people by his engagement.

14. Since 1974, the mandate of the Committee had been the mobilization of public opinion in all regions of the world to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination without outside interference, the right to independence and national sovereignty and the right of return to their homes and recovery of their property. The Committee had always worked towards a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in accordance with international law and had fully supported the two-State solution endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003). It had also supported the road map set out by the Quartet and had urged all parties to implement it.

15. His delegation was well aware, however, that some Member States viewed the Committee as partisan and had called its existence into question. Nevertheless, it remained the only intergovernmental body in the United Nations system that dealt solely with the political aspects of the Palestinian question with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. And, in answer to its critics, he stressed that promoting the right of the Palestinian people to an independent and sovereign State did not mean working against the interests of Israel. However, under its mandate, the Committee was compelled to denounce the Israeli policy of occupation and colonization of Palestinian territories. Senegal, which maintained cooperative relations with both Israel and Palestine, would not hesitate to denounce such a policy, even when practised by a country with which it shared the values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

16. The Committee was beginning its work for 2007 in the context of a number of promising recent developments, notably the inter-Palestinian agreement reached at Mecca on 9 February. The trilateral meeting held on 19 February by the United States Secretary of State, the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority, followed on 21 February by the meeting of the Quartet in Berlin, were other welcome steps along the path to a sustainable peace in the Middle East.

17. Concerns remained, however, regarding the difficult living conditions in the Palestinian territories. Senegal appealed urgently to the international community and the Quartet to mobilize international assistance in meeting the needs of the Palestinian people in the context of the declining humanitarian situation. His delegation also welcomed the preliminary proposals of the European Commission for improved coordination and mobilization of international assistance to the Palestinian people. It would continue to work with all the parties towards the conclusion of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the principle of land for peace.

Statement by the Observer for Palestine

18. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) conveyed the deep appreciation of his delegation to the Secretary-General for his participation in the work of the Committee, which demonstrated the importance that the Secretary-General attached to the question of Palestine as a whole on the agenda of the United Nations. His delegation fully supported the Committee's proposed programme of work for 2007 and stood ready to cooperate in ensuring that its objectives were accomplished.

19. Over the years, the Committee had played an important role as part of the ongoing effort to address the situation of the Palestinian people and the continued denial of their inalienable rights. As the fortieth year of Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land approached, the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people continued to deteriorate and they remained besieged by the illegal separation wall and ever-expanding Israeli settlements that swallowed up Palestinian land and isolated entire cities, including Occupied East Jerusalem. They also continued to face aggression by the Israeli occupying forces, including

widespread arrest and detention, with more than 10,000 Palestinians currently imprisoned by the occupying Power.

20. In that connection, he reiterated that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until it was fully resolved in accordance with international legitimacy. The Committee played an indispensable role through its efforts towards the effective exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights.

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

21. **The Chairman** said that, on 12 December 2006, the Security Council had heard a briefing by the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. At the end of the meeting, the Council President had read a statement on behalf of the members, expressing grave concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and calling for emergency assistance through the temporary international mechanism. On 15 December 2006, the General Assembly had convened the tenth emergency special session on illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and had adopted resolution ES-10/17 calling for the establishment of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

22. Other activities in December 2006 had included the United Nations Asian Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Kuala Lumpur and a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Abbas in Jerusalem, at which the former had agreed to transfer US$ 100 million in frozen tax rebates to the Palestinian Authority.

23. Developments during February 2007 had included meetings of the Quartet principals in Washington, D.C., and Berlin; a United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Doha; and an agreement between the Fatah and Hamas leaderships aimed at forming a national unity Government. At the Berlin meeting, the Quartet had reaffirmed its support for a Palestinian Government committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the road map, and had welcomed preliminary ideas put forward by the European Commission to improve the coordination and mobilization of international assistance to the Palestinian people.

24. Also in February 2007, the Security Council had met to consider the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". During the meeting, he had communicated the Committee's concerns regarding continued Israeli incursions in the West Bank and the excavation and construction in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. He had also recalled the obligations of the occupying Power under international humanitarian and human rights law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

25. Finally, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had hosted a meeting with Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas in Jerusalem during which the three participants had affirmed their commitment to a two-State solution and had reiterated their acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the road map.

26. **Mr. Hamidon Ali** (Malaysia) said that his delegation was disheartened that Israeli forces were besieging the West Bank city of Nablus at that very moment. The Government of Malaysia attached great importance to the Palestinian question and had been pleased to host the United Nations Asian Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People in December 2006. It also strongly believed in the importance of engaging the wider international community and looked forward to the upcoming United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Rome.

27. His delegation was of the opinion that the Israeli-Palestinian issue was at the core of the Middle East conflict and remained committed to working with the Committee to achieve a just solution.

Draft programme of work of the Committee (A/AC.183/2007/CRP.1)

28. **The Chairman** introduced the draft programme of work of the Committee for 2007 (A/AC.183/2007/CRP.1). Section I of the document summarized the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-first session concerning the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information. Section II

was a new section conveying the Committee's view of the current political situation, the situation on the ground and the development of the peace process. Section III set out the priority issues for 2007 and discussed the importance of enhancing cooperation and coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights. Section IV covered the proposed activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights.

29. **Mr. Rowe** (Sierra Leone) suggested that the draft programme of work should include a separate section on the humanitarian, social and economic situation of the Palestinian people.

30. **The Chairman** agreed that the humanitarian and economic aspects were extremely important and noted that the draft programme of work was just an outline which would be adjusted as necessary.

31. *The draft programme of work was adopted.*

32. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali) said that it was important that paragraph 17 of the programme of work indicated that the Committee should continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In the event that the situation deteriorated, the Committee should issue a statement expressing its concern.

The current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

33. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that, following the Mecca agreement and the efforts to establish a national unity Government, the Palestinian people were trying to put an end to internal fighting and to establish the means of resuming peace negotiations. However, the acts of provocation and aggression by the Government of Israel in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and Nablus indicated that it was not interested in pursuing peace negotiations. The Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine had sent three identical letters to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly referring to those acts of aggression. The international community should urge the Government of Israel to desist from carrying out such acts. The process of forming a national unity Government, which was made possible by the Mecca agreement, should lead to the lifting of the unfair financial and political siege on the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It should also open the door to the resumption of peace negotiations on final status issues.

34. Transitional negotiations since the Oslo Accords had not resulted in an end to the occupation or in the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. The tripartite and Quartet meetings held in 2007 had indicated that it might be possible to resume the peace negotiations and terminate the financial blockade. In addition, the recent visits by President Abbas to Europe and Arab countries had been encouraging. It was clear that the political process needed to be revived with a view to achieving the objective of a two-State solution. In that connection, a specific time frame was needed for the establishment of a Palestinian State. In addition, it was necessary to convene a meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure that the Government of Israel, as the occupying Power, complied with the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee should continue to meet with the concerned parties in order to achieve that objective.

35. The Committee should play an active role in the Security Council and the General Assembly with the aim of ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a two-State solution within a relatively short and clearly defined period of time. His delegation wished to reiterate the suggestion made in 2006 that the Committee might play an advisory role to the Secretary-General on matters relating to the Quartet. In addition, seminars and conferences should be held in Europe with a view to enhancing the role of European States in moving the political process forward and resuming assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. It was important to continue the efforts to expand the membership of the Committee to include more members from Europe and South America, two regions that were underrepresented in the Committee. The Committee should also play an active role in ensuring the timely establishment of the Register of Damage, as mandated by the General Assembly.

36. The Committee should highlight the fact that 2007 marked the fortieth year of the occupation, which was the longest in modern history. It was important to redouble efforts to bring an end to the occupation and to the human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people. The Division for Palestinian

Rights should receive the necessary support to enable it to fulfil its mandate in accordance with General Assembly resolutions.

37. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that the Palestine-Israel issue was central to the political unrest in the Middle East and it was clear that a solution could only be reached through direct negotiations between the two parties aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution based on United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab peace initiative and the Quartet's road map. With a view to giving fresh impetus to the peace process, the President of Pakistan had met with the leaders of key Islamic countries and had held consultations on the situation in the Middle East, including on the consequences of a possible escalation of the violence. It had been agreed that there was a need for a new initiative to reverse the negative trends and to address the challenges. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia and Jordan, and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, had met in Islamabad on 25 February 2007. Prior to the meeting, President Musharraf had discussed the latest developments in the Palestinian Authority and the planned meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs with President Abbas. The leaders of Syria and Iran had also been consulted.

38. During the meeting in Islamabad, the Ministers had focused on new ideas to address the situation in the Middle East, the internal and external challenges confronting the Muslim world, the situations in the region and in the Palestinian territories and the promotion of unity, solidarity and harmony among Muslim countries. The Ministers had agreed on a statement which recognized the need for the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. They had expressed concern about the continuing occupation and illegal actions by Israel; called for unity among the Palestinians and welcomed the establishment of the national unity Government; and agreed that the international community must immediately help the national unity Government to revive economic activity in the Palestinian territories. The Ministers had also called for withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Syrian and Lebanese territories.

39. The Ministers had voiced concern over the tensions in Lebanon and called on all parties to exercise restraint and to respect Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. They supported the Government of Lebanon and the deployment of its army throughout the territory. They had reiterated their commitment to combating all forms of terrorism and extremism and expressed concern about campaigns to malign Islam. Further discussions were planned at a forthcoming summit in Mecca. In addition, further consultations would be held with other Islamic States and their leaders to bring to bear the weight of the Islamic world in resolving the many urgent issues facing the Muslim Ummah.

40. **Mr. Malmierca Díaz** (Cuba) said that the Government of Israel must put an end to the illegal occupation and comply with United Nations resolutions and international law. The continued use of the power of veto in the Security Council by one Member State encouraged the Government of Israel to act with impunity. The Mecca agreement should help the Palestinian people prosper under a national unity Government. His delegation urged the international community not to put any conditions on the provision of assistance to the Palestinian people.

41. **Mr. Whitley** (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)) said that the future outlook for Palestinians would depend heavily on whether the national unity Government to be formed succeeded in ending the Western aid boycott of the Palestinian Authority and bringing about the release of revenues withheld by the Government of Israel.

42. It would take many months, if not years, for the Palestinian people to recover from the dire poverty caused by recent events. High levels of unemployment were likely to continue, as the prospects for employment in Israel were dim for many and the private sector in the West Bank and Gaza would take time to regain strength. Dependence on external assistance was thus likely to remain high in the foreseeable future, which underscored the continuing vital role played by humanitarian agencies.

43. Conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip differed markedly, owing in large part to the contrasting nature of Israeli actions and policies. Conditions in Gaza were defined by a near-complete air, sea and land blockade of the territory, causing economic suffocation. The West Bank, by contrast, was experiencing tightening internal controls on Palestinian movement within the territory. To date, the Israeli

Government's promise to relax those controls had not been met. In the West Bank, the network of physical barriers to Palestinian movement was accompanied by an increasingly strict permits regime which was hampering the Agency's work. The trisecting of the territory by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was being ever more tightly enforced, in the name of preserving the security of Israelis. The continued construction of the separation barrier and the expansion of Jewish settlements were other defining features of life in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Tens of thousands of Palestinian livelihoods would be severely affected once the wall was completed, as more than 500,000 Palestinians living within the kilometre-wide strip on the east side of the barrier needed to cross it daily to reach farms and places of work or to maintain family ties. To date, few crossing gates were open or functioning, as promised. A significant proportion of those affected were refugees, already among the poorest in the community. The wall was forcing a growing number of persons to live separately from family members, particularly in and around Jerusalem.

44. Because of the financial constraints imposed on the Palestinian Authority, unemployment had inevitably risen. Educated young men and women were among the worst off. More than half of all Palestinian households were currently below the official poverty line, and almost three quarters of all refugees were now living in poverty.

45. IDF operations, especially search and arrest raids, continued to intensify in 2007. Clashes had become much more lethal than in previous years. In 2006, in the West Bank and Gaza there had been over three times more Palestinian fatalities resulting from clashes with the IDF than in 2005. The casualty toll excluded intra-Palestinian violence, a particularly troubling feature of the last quarter of 2006 and the first weeks of 2007.

46. Unemployment in the Gaza Strip was significantly higher than in the West Bank, in some places averaging more than 40 per cent. Over half of persons under 25 had no job. There were acute social strains as a result. There were no longer any opportunities to find day labour in Israel, previously the largest source of income for the Gaza Strip, as no workers had been permitted to enter Israel since 12 March 2006. Apart from small shops and farms, the private sector was almost completely paralysed. The fishing industry, supporting 30,000 families, was in bad shape because of the Israeli naval blockade.

47. The survival of three quarters of the Gazan population currently depended entirely or partly on food aid from the United Nations. There was a high degree of vulnerability among the population, and no alternative sources of sustenance existed for many, which gave cause for concern about the poor donor response to the new emergency appeal by UNRWA: out of the $246 million requested, only $17 million had been pledged to date. The shortage of funds meant that the Agency had been obliged to stretch food rations and halt cash assistance to indigent persons since December.

48. The crisis in the education sector in Gaza was a matter of real concern for UNRWA. The factionalization of Palestinian society had deepened sharply in the previous year as a result of Western and Israeli policies and had even affected schoolchildren. Elementary schoolchildren in Gaza were dividing into Fatah and Hamas followers, threatening to follow the sadly familiar example of Northern Ireland.

49. In conclusion, factional violence and the general breakdown of law and order in Gaza and parts of the West Bank were troubling. In Gaza, the intensity of the violence had forced the suspension of UNRWA programmes on several occasions. The current ceasefire remained fragile and there was a serious risk of more bloody violence unless Palestinian political stability was shored up. The failure of foreign Governments to engage with the Palestinian national unity Government, as agreed in Mecca, could lead to another breakdown. UNRWA fervently hoped that such an eventuality would be avoided.

Report by the Chairman on the United Nations Asian Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Kuala Lumpur, 15 and 16 December 2006, and the United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, Kuala Lumpur, 17 December 2006

50. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to the reports on the United Nations Asian Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, held in Kuala Lumpur with the aim of mobilizing the countries of Asia and the Pacific to support the

exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights.

51. The themes of the Asian Meeting had included: the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; realizing a shared vision of peace between Israelis and Palestinians; and international efforts at salvaging peace in the Middle East and the support of countries of Asia and the Pacific for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

52. At the close of the meeting, the participants had adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which emphasized that the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territory remained the root cause of the conflict. They had expressed concern at the recent escalation of Israeli military attacks in the Gaza Strip, particularly the tragic events that had taken place in the town of Beit Hanoun, and called upon the international community, including members of the Quartet, to establish a credible and effective third-party monitoring mechanism. The participants had condemned the continuing construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the lack of action on freezing settlement activities, despite repeated appeals by the Quartet and the wider international community. They had expressed frustration at the deepening economic, social and humanitarian crisis and the isolation of the Gaza Strip and urged donors to give generously to the emergency appeal by 12 United Nations agencies and 14 NGOs aimed at addressing a rapidly worsening humanitarian situation.

53. Discussions at the United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People had focused on such issues as ways in which civil society in the region could help to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The participants had called for strengthening the centrality of the United Nations for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Participating organizations had decided to establish an Asian Coordinating Network on Palestine.

54. In accordance with established practice, the reports of the two meetings at Kuala Lumpur would be issued, in due course, as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Report by the Chairman on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Doha, 5 and 6 February 2007

55. **The Chairman**, reporting on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Doha on 5 and 6 February 2007, said that opening statements had been made by the representatives of Qatar and Palestine, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on behalf of the Secretary-General, and himself on behalf of the Committee.

56. In the ensuing plenary sessions, presentations had been made by 13 experts, including 4 Palestinians and 3 Israelis. The panellists had assessed the socio-economic and humanitarian emergency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the international response to the needs of the Palestinian people, and efforts to create conditions for Palestinian economic recovery.

57. Participants had heard first-hand reports of the current economic and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and had been reminded about the serious effects of the occupation on the daily life of Palestinians. Participants had concurred that the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people should not be hostage to political constraints and had called on the international community to redouble efforts to assist Palestinians in need. It had been reiterated that Israel must release the Palestinian tax revenues withheld and resume the periodic tax payments without further delay.

58. Participants had also emphasized the crucial importance of international donor assistance to the functioning of the Palestinian institutions at the current time of crisis. The Committee had renewed its call to the international donor community to continue the assistance programmes and address the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation with fresh thinking. While participants had acknowledged the efforts by the European Union to create a temporary international mechanism, its effectiveness did not match the programmes that had been in place before the Palestinian elections of January 2006. Participants, however, had reiterated that emergency assistance alone would not provide for sustainable development of the Palestinian people. The restrictions on movement were the major obstacle to the improvement of the humanitarian situation and to any long-term economic recovery. Those restrictions also hampered

efforts by international organizations on the ground to deliver emergency aid. The Agreement on Movement and Access of 15 November 2005 should therefore be implemented.

59. There had also been discussions on the determined efforts by the various United Nations entities to assist Palestinian people in need. However, the capacities of United Nations entities were limited and could not be a substitute for established Palestinian institutions. Above all, the Seminar had reminded participants that without a political solution to the question of Palestine, all those valuable efforts would not lead to a substantial social or economic recovery. Sustainable economic and social development would only materialize in a viable Palestinian State created on the basis of the 1967 borders.

60. In accordance with established practice, the report of the Seminar would be issued, in due course, as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights and circulated at the forthcoming sessions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 22 and 23 March 2007 (Working Paper No. 1)

61. **The Chairman** drew attention to Working Paper No. 1, setting out the provisional programme for the forthcoming meeting in Rome. The objective of the meeting was to support and promote international efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, focus the international community's attention on the question of Palestine and emphasize the urgency of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

62. **Mr. Mantovani** (Observer for Italy) said that the Rome meeting would underscore the fundamental importance of relaunching the peace process in the Middle East and achieving a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly over that issue, was a threat to international peace and stability and had increasingly become a key symbol of a perceived rift between the Western and Muslim worlds. There was an urgent need to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting negotiated settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict consistent with the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference of 1991 and its principles, including land for peace, and based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the "parameters" put forward by former President Clinton in 2000 for a final-status agreement, the Arab peace initiative of 2002 and the road map.

63. His Government reiterated the fundamental role of the parties, the Arab countries and the Quartet and stressed the need to move swiftly towards the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. Italy welcomed the commitment undertaken in the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of November 2006 in Tampere to promote a culture of dialogue. In that spirit, his Government trusted that the meeting in Rome would make a specific contribution to achieving peace in the Middle East.

64. *Working Paper No. 1 was approved.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee (Working Paper No. 2)

65. **The Chairman** drew attention to Working Paper No. 2, containing applications by three NGOs for accreditation to the Committee — Women for Palestine, the Order of the Saint John of Jerusalem and the Palestine Freedom Project. As was customary, the Bureau, with the assistance of the Division for Palestinian Rights, had reviewed the applications and concluded that they emanated from recognized non-profit organizations which fulfilled the criteria for accreditation. The Bureau therefore recommended that the organizations concerned should be accredited.

66. *Working Paper No. 2 was approved.*

Other matters

67. **Mr. Hamidon Ali** (Malaysia) said that the question raised by Palestine on expanding the membership of the Committee required further discussion. He would like to know what efforts had been made by the Bureau to achieve such an expansion.

68. **The Chairman** said that during the past two to three years the Committee had approached Member States at all levels and in all regions to strengthen the composition of the Committee. To date, it had received no expression of interest in or applications for Committee membership. He noted, however, that many of the Member States which had been reluctant to be involved in the work of the Committee in the past had

attended recent Committee events. Although several Member States in particular regions preferred to remain as observers, the Committee would continue to pursue efforts to address the important issue of broadening representation among its membership.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.